

About Lagoon Assessments

Full manure lagoons create a potential to pollute state waters. Full ponds are at risk to overflow, create unsafe dike conditions or lead producers to make wet weather applications that run off to surface water. Heavy rainfall cannot be controlled, but delayed maintenance, poor planning, or mismanagement for whatever reasons, will increase the risk of discharges to waters of the state.

History - The Fall lagoon assessment effort began with a focus on Whatcom County in 2005. Since then, the effort has broadened to include facilities in all parts of the state.

DNMP inspectors encourage producers to maximize storage capacity going into winter and alert them to potential problems at a time when pre-winter solutions are still possible. Inspectors use the lagoon assessment as a tool to diagnose potential storage concerns. This includes evaluating the facility's lagoon for: 1) manure solids management, 2) dike condition, and 3) storage level.

2008 Results - Inspectors assessed a total of 279 lagoons at 119 facilities throughout the state. Additional pump-down was needed at 15% of inspected lagoons. Other issues discovered included heavy solids build up and dike conditions requiring some additional evaluation. Ten facilities were identified as high risk; inspectors conducted follow-up inspections to document that the necessary work had been completed prior to the winter storage season.

Overall, rainfall was at or below normal for the storage season throughout the state. As lagoon inspections are conducted, WSDA inspectors repeatedly see that having lagoons properly maintained and pumped prior to the fall storage season, provides the best protection to waters of the state for producers. Still there were a number of lagoons that were very full coming out of the wet season. Some field applications were made late in the fall and early in the spring, which may have been directly related to pre-storage season lagoon levels or high solids content.

In the last twelve months, WSDA issued 20 enforcement actions for water quality violations at dairies, including 16 Notices of Correction and four penalties totaling \$21,000

2009 - This year's assessment will be undertaken beginning late-September and continuing through October. Facilities in targeted areas will be notified of the planned dates for their area. Inspectors may not inspect all facilities that are notified.